

# The changing face of L.A.

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By Harrison Sheppard

SACRAMENTO — Los Angeles County's racial makeup is expected to change dramatically by 2050, with Hispanic and Asian populations doubling to account for more than 80 percent of residents as the number of whites and blacks shrinks in half.

The county's population will grow from 9.6 million in 2000 to 13 million in 2050, with Latinos growing to 8.4 million, or 65 percent of the total, according to state population projections issued Monday.

The number of Asians will double to 2.1 million, overtaking whites, whose numbers will fall to 1.5 million. The African-American population is expected to decline to 583,000 in 2050 from 910,000 in 2000.

L.A. County magnifies a statewide trend. Almost 60 million people will live in California by 2050 — and most of them will be Latino.

Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez, D-Los Angeles, said the state needs to do more planning now to prepare for that phenomenal growth.

"The news that by 2050 Latinos will be the majority in a state of 60 million Californians should spur action now to plan and prepare for this growth," Núñez said in a written statement.

"If we don't work now to end the achievement gap that sees Latino dropout rates still too high and the test scores of poor students and English learners still too low, we'll have significant numbers of the majority population coming out under-served and under-prepared for real participation in this state and its economy."

The state Department of Finance projects that California's Hispanic population will reach 52 percent of the state's total by the year 2042 through a combination of immigration and higher birthrates. Whites will make up 26 percent, Asians will be at 13 percent and blacks at 5 percent.

By contrast, in 2010 the state is expected to be about 36 percent Latino, 42 percent white, 12 percent Asian and 5 percent black, with 39 million people.

"The Hispanic population is relatively younger, and it has relatively higher fertility than the white population," said Mary Heim, chief of the state's demographic research unit.

## **Higher birthrates**

Demographic experts said the rapid growth rate in the Latino population is driven primarily by higher birthrates rather than immigration.

Overall immigration into California has gradually been decreasing over the past decade. But the immigration that is occurring is primarily from Latin America, while the birthrate among the Latino population is higher — 2.3 births for Latinas, compared with 1.8 births for white, black and Asian women.

At the same time, white baby boomers are expected to die at a faster rate than they will be replaced by the younger generation.

"So you see a natural increase — the excess of births over deaths — driving growth in the Hispanic population," Heim said. "On the other hand, you have an older white population. ... As the baby boomers get up there, the number of deaths start exceeding the number of births."

That reflects national, and even international trends, in which the populations of industrialized European nations, as well as Japan, are aging and not being quickly replaced, while younger immigrants from Africa and Latin America move in to supplement the younger generations, said Dowell Myers, a professor of urban planning and demography at the University of Southern California.

But even some parts of Latin America are also experiencing lower birth rates, Myers noted. Mexico had a birthrate of 6.8 in 1970, but it is now down to 2.4 and continuing to decline, he said. That means that in 20 years, the United States is likely to have a smaller pool of immigrant workers arriving from Mexico.

"Immigration has been slowing down since 1990," he said. "So most of this growth is going to be babies being born. The white population is older, and the only thing they're growing is their Social Security checks. They're going to be supported by this younger work force of Latinos."

Outside L.A. County, fast-growing Riverside County will become the state's second-most-populous county by 2050 — home to about 4.7 million people. In 2000, Riverside ranked sixth, with 1.5 million people.

The increased growth in the state's overall population is expected to put new pressures on infrastructure, from highways to schools to water supply.

## **Trouble keeping up**

Government officials and urban planners are already having trouble keeping up with current growth, and many say the state will have to significantly boost its spending on infrastructure to accommodate 60 million people.

Hasan Ikhata, director of planning and policy for the Southern California Association of Governments, said his group can list at least \$100 billion in needed transportation projects for the region that have no available funding.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority is currently revising its long-range plan through the year 2030. The agency expects to have at least \$6.3 billion for new projects through then, but even that is unlikely to fully meet the region's needs, said Metro long-range planning director Heather Hills.

"We have a lot of unmet needs, both on the operating side and the projects that are in the planning stage," Hills said.

Among projects planned in the next decade are the Exposition light-rail line, new car-pool lanes on the Golden State Freeway and a north-south busway in the San Fernando Valley.